

*In Lieu of a Regular Monthly Meeting in August, the  
Environmental Commission Held a Strategic Retreat*

**Rockville Environment Commission  
Retreat Meeting Minutes**

August 29, 2009

**Purpose**

The Environmental Commission held a strategic planning retreat at the Glenview Mansion Cottage on August 29, 2009. The purpose of this retreat was to refine the Commission's Mission and Vision and identify strategic priorities for 2010 and 2011. Faith Klareich, Seth Adams, Steve Cardin, Christine Davidson-McCord, David Davis, Kris Dighe, Beri Kravitz, Dominique Lorang-Leins and Tolulope Odunlami attended the retreat. Heather Gewandter facilitated the discussion.

**What Do You Want to Learn From this Retreat?**

Each member shared what they hoped to accomplish by the end of the day. The resulting list of expectations is below. Some of these were addressed during the meeting. All items that were not addressed were added to a parking lot for discussion during regularly-scheduled, future meetings.

- Develop a specific list of goals to accomplish with timelines and work plans.
- Discuss how to work with the City to better accomplish our goals.
- Discuss how to better position ourselves to be "boots on the ground" in the communities and participate in more events like stream clean-ups.
- Develop a list of events (i.e. Science Day) so that we can get them on our calendar and plan out how or if we will participate. This allows us to plan ahead.
- Develop a vision for moving forward that is a benefit to the City.
- Develop clear methods to work with/communicate with City staff, other commissions and the Mayor and Council.
- Define environmental stakeholders throughout the City and develop a way to work with them.
- Develop actionable ways to get existing organizations to work with us.
- Develop an evaluation methodology so we can continually assess what has been accomplished and what programs/activities are not working.
- Help Environmental Management Division and the City develop enforcement procedures for non-recyclers.

**Mission**

The group discussed the fundamental purpose of the organization, consulted the current mission statement (from the website) as well as the 2002 Resolution establishing the Commission to come up with suggestions for their refined mission statement. The group wanted to incorporate the following ideas:

- Be part of City decision-making on topics related to the environment; and

- Take part in outreach activities to better inform and engage all stakeholders on environmental programs, policies, issues, etc.

Heather Gewandter, the facilitator, was given language suggestions and drafted the revised mission statement, below. The statement below will be edited by the Commission via email. The Commission on the Environment's mission is to be the voice for the environmental agenda within the City of Rockville. The Commission has a presence in City decisions that effect human health and the environment. Core to the mission is engaging businesses, residents and City decision-makers to promote a sustainable community through initiatives, programs and policies relating to natural resources management and development, energy efficiency, watershed stewardship and protection, pollution prevention and public education.

### **Vision Statement**

The Commission developed the following mission statement.

To make the City of Rockville the State's recognized leader in environmental stewardship.

### **Brainstorm Activities and Priorities**

The Commission identified the following as a "wish list" of activities they would like to either, carryout as a group or help the city carryout. The stated actions were identified as priorities.

- Pursue a closer working relationship with the Mayor and Council through the Council Liaison (if established); and briefings, joint meetings and other communication with Council members. This will put the Commission in a better position to give input to the Mayor and Council and to help inform them on emerging environmental issues.\*
- Identify existing activities to increase urban tree canopy cover in order to support that effort or bring this issue to the attention of the City foresters and help them plan for increase coverage.
- Develop an external communication plan. Topics might include the following (these might be stand alone activities as well):
  - Revision of the website to get "more useful info" and better organization.\*
  - Engaging local businesses on environmental issues – educate them, for example, help them use green business practices and services.
  - Create relationships with existing environmental organizations, leverage existing activities and work together.
  - Develop a speaker's bureau.
  - Develop standard presentations on City environmental initiatives like Adopt-A-Stream or other environmental material (information on home energy audits) and present them to HOA and other residential meetings.\*
  - Develop a standing display kit and demonstration toolbox to showcase at events like Science Day and Hometown Holidays. This should help develop a stronger presence in the community.\*
  - Work with the City to identify locations, install and record/promote "living demonstration" sites.
  - Work with City to design, promote and carry-out an "eco-fair" with expert discussions.
  - Develop and promote a film-based environmental solutions contest.

- Help City staff to develop an environmental cable show. This may highlight environmental excellence award winners.
- Initiate a backyard habitat (BYH) campaign that promotes businesses that have BYH supplies.
- Recruit additional Environment Commission Committee members. \*
- Develop a process to increase communication with internal, non-environment city staff and commissions.
  - Consider using wiki to collaborate better within the commission and with other City Commissions.
  - Work with City Clerk to get other Commissions' discussion topics.
- Become an official part of the review and approval process during design and construction of municipal projects. This includes municipal building processes. This includes neighborhood planning efforts (like the Twinbrook plan just developed) and partner projects like Town Center Phase II\*
- Be part of the review process for RFPs that are related to environmental topics. Ex. The noise policy study.
- Develop an energy analysis and conservation best management guide to be used for City processes and as education material for small businesses.
- Help the City be proactive in energy efficiency renovations – the City should lead by example.
- Periodically tour innovative technology facilities throughout the City.
- Partner with Metro to promote the Backyard Habitat program at Metro stations.
- Develop metrics to measure the success of the City's environmental program.
- Develop policy white papers or influence existing initiatives in the following areas:
  - Encouraging the City to become more pedestrian and bike friendly.
  - Identifying methods to audit the City development review and permitting process to identify incentives for green building projects.\*
  - Promote the idea of using Community Enhancement and other parts of the Police Department to educate about and enforcement environmental infractions.
  - Encourage the development (if not already done) of preventative maintenance plans for programs like road maintenance to ensure we are using our resources wisely. For example, ensure that roads need to be repaved before repairing them. (resource conservation issue)
  - Promote recycling pick-up in the right away or places like Town Center. Use Bethesda Green and the business sponsored recycling receptacles as a model. Help the City set higher goals for residential recycling rates.\*

### **Priority Activity Workplan**

The group identified three high-priority projects for which workplans were developed. Each workplan included actions to complete, timeline and means to measure success. The group will complete this exercise for the rest of their priority activities during regularly-scheduled, future meetings.

#### **I. External communications with neighborhood associations and HOAs Actions/Timeline**

- Identify organizations and develop procedures for lines of communication (90 days)
- Develop an agenda for greening communities (90 days)
- Develop PowerPoint presentations and graphic displays on the following topics (60 days):
  - i. Watershed protection issues – stormwater runoff
  - ii. Save Our Streams
  - iii. Rain barrels
  - iv. Backyard habitats – drought resistant plants, reduction in lawn size and non-native species, composting techniques and equipment
  - v. Increase pervious surfaces
  - vi. Light colored shingles
  - vii. Energy efficiency (solar and wind)
  - viii. Tax credits
  - ix. Organic vegetable gardens
  - x. Rockville recycling opportunities
  - xi. Household hazardous waste disposal options

#### Metrics

- Identify and contact 75% of HOAs
- Present to at least 50% of HOAs contacted
- Develop a tool to measure baseline level of “green”
- Follow-up with tool to identify how presentation changed HOA members’ level of “green” – goal is to improve baseline by 25%
- Report results to Mayor and Council

### II. Recycling Partnership (with businesses)

#### Action/Timeline

- Determine % Recycling (Oct 2009)
- Determine Costs (Oct 2009):
  - i. Receptacles and type
  - ii. Pick up
  - iii. To businesses
  - iv. Cost of trash vs. recycling
- Business outreach information (Nov 2009)
- Prepare proposal to City (Dec 2009)
- Implementation (March-Dec 2010)

### III. Residential Recycling

#### Action/timeline

- Determine current percent of recycling (Oct 2009)
- Trends in data
- Determine costs
  - i. Recycling bins
  - ii. Trash bins

- iii. Educational program
  - iv. Trash/recycling
- Presentations (2010)
  - i. HOAs
  - ii. Cable
  - iii. Hometown Holidays
  - iv. Schools

#### IV. Internal Audit – planning/review/inspection

##### Actions

- Initial survey
- Develop workflow map
- Identify phasing and associated responsibilities
- Stream line plan – post 1 and 2
- Move sample project through process
- Modify/clarify SOP

##### Timeframe

Prior to Green Building Code update, within 6 months

##### Metrics

- Time
- Quantity
- Complaints

#### **Parking Lot**

The following topics were mentioned during the retreat. The Environment Commission would like to follow-up on each item during future meetings.

- Coordinate with events staff and other relevant city staff (PIO, neighborhood liaisons, etc) to identify all upcoming outreach opportunities.
- Develop a process for City staff interactions with Environment Commission.
- Set up meetings with neighborhood liaisons and school officials to see how we can partner better to get the word out.
- Discuss workflow between the Commission and its committees.
- Develop workplans for additional priority activities.

*These Discussions will be continued at the next several regular monthly meetings of the Commission.*